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The meeting was called to order at 9.50 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions (A/59/86-E/2004/69 and A/59/293)

1. **Mr. Kennedy** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions (A/59/293), said that the report covered nine countries facing a variety of humanitarian problems. Many of them, after emerging from long periods from conflict or political unrest, encountered numerous problems that they could resolve only with international assistance. The immediate concern of those countries was often the reintegration of numerous refugees and displaced persons who, on return from enforced exile, needed a roof and a plot of land or a job in order to resume a normal and peaceful life. It was the responsibility of the public authorities, with the assistance of the international community, to establish job creation, community development and national reconciliation programmes.

2. Such countries often had an infrastructure disrupted by years of conflict, an exchequer that was more or less depleted, inadequate fiscal revenue and huge external debt. They had little attraction for private investors and experienced great difficulty in making a start on their economic recovery and consequently in investing in health, education and other sectors essential for long-term productivity. National recovery programmes therefore depended heavily on outside financing. A new commitment by the international financial institutions was more necessary than ever to help such countries to ensure their development.

3. The report also revealed cases of countries that were already suffering from chronic food insecurity and that also had to contend with periods of drought and with the AIDS pandemic, which undermined the productivity of their population. When drought brought a population to the verge of famine, it was possible to mobilize massive emergency assistance. However, as drought was a recurrent phenomenon, efforts must be made to limit its impact by measures such as voluntary resettlement of populations, improved food production techniques, reforestation and more rational water resources management.

4. In conclusion, the report recommended that the situation in some of those countries that were no longer in a crisis situation and currently received assistance mainly for economic recovery and development rather than emergency assistance, should no longer be considered under the agenda item.

5. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), introducing the report on assistance to Mozambique (A/59/86-E/2004/69), emphasized the close collaboration and excellent working relations, both in the field and at Headquarters between UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

6. On emerging from the conflict, Mozambique had suffered from episodes of drought which had required coordinated action by United Nations bodies to assist it in preparing for the possibility of future episodes. On the structural level, the Mozambican Government, which was responsible for disaster management, had established the National Institute for Disaster Management which had the task of contingency planning and coordination of emergency response at the technical level and which had drawn up a contingency relief plan. At the inter-agency level, the United Nations Disaster Management Team and a working group to assist it in its work had been created with the assistance of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Disaster Management Partners Group concentrated on information-sharing for all partners (United Nations agencies, Governments, non-governmental organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and donors). The basis for intervention by United Nations bodies was the Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal which had been issued in July 2003.

7. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was also exacting a heavy toll in Mozambique, both among adults and among young people aged under 20 years, the majority of victims being women. In the areas suffering from drought and food insecurity, the pandemic increased the vulnerability of families and threatened the overall production capacity. Despite spectacular economic growth, Mozambique was the sixth poorest country in the world. In view of the situation, the United Nations bodies had reviewed the Inter-Agency Emergency

Preparedness and Response Plan so as to place greater emphasis on combating HIV/AIDS, to which they were allocating at least 25 per cent of their core resources.

8. The United Nations country team in Mozambique was calling for the strengthening of inter-agency collaboration in the field, in particular with regard to combating HIV/AIDS and reducing vulnerability, an approach that was ideally suited to joint programming. The establishment of a national disaster management plan was essential in order to provide a reference framework for all the agencies participating in risk management. The National Institute for Disaster Management should also be strengthened in order to enable it to transcend the emergency planning stage and embark on the task of coordination with a view to preparing a national disaster management plan. That being so, as the concerns that had led the General Assembly to ask the Secretary-General to submit a report specifically on Mozambique had generally been met, UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs were recommending that the Assembly should not request a further report on that country at the current session.

9. **Mr. Nieuwenhuis** (Netherlands) pointed out that several of the countries discussed in the report were transition countries and that, as the representatives of the Secretary-General had said, the item under discussion concerned more particularly the countries that had to contend with, or were recovering from, a serious humanitarian crisis. Consequently, the Secretariat should perhaps envisage interventions in situations of humanitarian distress currently being experienced by other regions not referred to in the report, such as northern Uganda and the Sudan. Referring to the question of the transition from the assistance phase to the development phase, which necessarily had organizational implications for United Nations bodies, he asked what arrangements had been made between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP for the coordination of assistance and the phased development process in the transition countries.

10. **Mr. Kennedy** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that Angola was a case in point. As everyone knew, that country had been ravaged for many years by a war which had had serious repercussions and in particular had caused the displacement of about a third of the population. Once peace had been restored, it had been possible to start redirecting efforts towards reconstruction and development and effective internal arrangements had been made in that context for collaboration between the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which was concerned essentially with relief, and UNDP, which focused on reconstruction and development. The Office had reduced its staff in the field while, at the same time, some of its functions had been transferred to UNDP or to the Government. Barring unforeseen events, the entire staff of the Office should have left the country within six months; the role of UNDP, and particularly that of the Government, would thus be reinforced. There was probably no particular approach that was applicable to all countries, but that was the outline of what had been decided in that particular case.

11. Replying to the question raised concerning Uganda and the Sudan, he said that it was for the General Assembly to decide whether it would be appropriate to request reports on those countries but that the international community should certainly address two major humanitarian crises. With regard to southern Sudan, he hoped that the Naivasha peace talks would soon be successfully concluded and that a start could be made on reconstruction and recovery. With regard to the situation in Darfur, there was no need to repeat the concerns of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In northern Uganda, the Office was collaborating closely with the Government to address the humanitarian problems caused by the atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance Army, the kidnapping of children and the displacement of millions of people.

12. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme), referring to Mozambique and Uganda, which exemplified the problems of the gradual transition from an approach based on emergency assistance provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to an approach that gave greater prominence to the role of the Resident Coordinator and to questions of disaster preparedness in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, said that the Framework would shortly be the subject of a midterm review and that, in that context, the provision of support for the coordination of planning and disaster relief activities was an important consideration.

13. The Chairman asked whether there were any key factors on which attention should be especially focused

in seeking to resolve the fundamental problems of the countries under consideration, despite their varying situations.

14. **Mr. Kennedy** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that the international community should ensure that there was no weakening of interest in the countries concerned. When nations were in crisis, the situation was taken up by the media and — quite rightly — discussed at meetings of the United Nations and other international bodies. As soon as a crisis situation ceased to be a priority for the press and work started on the hazardous task of consolidating peace and stability, the financial, political and other support provided by the international community tended to fall away as other "urgent" crises captured its attention. It was therefore essential to retain a balanced perspective on the various problems. That was the approach adopted by his Office and, in his view, the international community should follow suit. Secondly, it was important to support the efforts of any government seeking to restore its authority and recover its capacity to govern and administer every aspect of the life of its country. The remarkable work of the Sierra Leonean Government, which had managed to re-establish its presence throughout the country after a civil war, with the support of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, provided a good example of what could be done if a government and the international community worked together.

15. **Mr. Wahba** (United Nations Development Programme) said, in support of Mr. Kennedy's remarks, that the international community must put the emphasis on long-term commitment at the financial and political level during the transition between the relief phase and the development phase. In countries such as Serbia and Montenegro or Tajikistan, efforts must be made to consolidate the achievements arising out of the direct action taken by the Government.

16. **Mr. Nieuwenhuis** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, and the countries of the European Free Trade Association, members of the European Area, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that the Union would make general remarks on humanitarian issues under agenda item 39 when it was discussed in plenary meeting on 11 November. Meanwhile, it wished to concentrate on difficulties arising in the context of the transition from relief to development in the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions (A/59/293) and in those currently undergoing a major humanitarian crisis.

17. It often happened that, following the end of a conflict, the humanitarian situation remained very worrying. Post-conflict countries were often confronted with the mass return of displaced persons, a devastated social or institutional infrastructure, economic deprivation and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the humanitarian needs in post-conflict situations tended to increase rather than decrease. In the aftermath of natural disasters, too, especially in countries that were already vulnerable, humanitarian assistance remained a necessity in the medium term.

18. There were many challenges in the transition from relief to sustainable development. Although it realized that much remained to be done, the European Union welcomed the work done by the Working Group on Transition, in which the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs participated jointly. In transition, as during the relief phase, capacity-building was important in enabling national Governments to assume their responsibilities. Civil society should also be given the chance to develop an important role. If governments and non-governmental actors played their roles, the United Nations need to provide only support and capacity-building. Investment should be made in social sectors, with support from the international community. Education, health care — including the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis — and job creation were prerequisites for the transition from a humanitarian crisis to recovery and sustainable development. Special attention should be paid to women and vulnerable groups, such as children. Governments must take such action without delay.

19. The European Union welcomed the fact that, in some of the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, especially the Comoros, Mozambique, Serbia and Montenegro and Tajikistan, the humanitarian situation had improved and moves towards development were under way. The experience

and lessons learned might benefit other countries in transition.

20. In other countries and regions, including several not mentioned in the report, humanitarian challenges remained, such as in northern Uganda, where, although the humanitarian situation had not deteriorated, the European Union remained concerned about the continuing insecurity and the large numbers of internally displaced persons, amounting to over a million, some of whom were out of reach of much-needed assistance. The suffering of large numbers of children was also a cause for concern. The situation was such that measures were needed in virtually every area, especially water and sanitation and health and nutrition.

21. The humanitarian situation in several parts of the Sudan, particularly in Darfur, remained very serious. Insecurity in Darfur was an overriding concern. It constituted an obstacle to the provision of aid, with the result that needs were exacerbated still further. During 2004, the Union had contributed generously to the humanitarian efforts in the Sudan. While Darfur required special attention, the considerable needs elsewhere in the country should not be neglected. An improvement in the humanitarian situation in the Sudan was essential, under the leadership of the African Union and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and with assistance from the international community.

22. In Afghanistan, a lack of security and access was also the main constraint for humanitarian aid delivery to various regions of the country. In addition to ensuring a complex post-conflict situation, Afghanistan was also vulnerable to natural disasters, such as drought and earthquakes. Its humanitarian needs persisted, especially for returning refugees and the internally displaced.

23. Although the humanitarian situation had improved since the end of conflict in Angola, economic growth had not yet resulted in better living conditions for its people, 68 per cent of whom lived below the poverty line. Good governance, capacity-building, additional resources for the sectors which were crucial for development and strong partnerships among all stakeholders were imperative during the transition phase. Food aid, water and sanitation and demining remained important, given the country's continuing vulnerability in those areas.

24. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the fact that the conflict had ended, the European Union remained concerned by the continuing violence, especially against women, and by the overall humanitarian situation. The international community must provide sufficient aid to ensure that the enormous challenges facing the country could be surmounted by the Government, which should aim for a secure environment for its population, education, health care, public administration, a judicial system and job creation. The situation was still particularly difficult in the east of the country, where 4 million people were displaced. A lack of security had compounded the suffering, as outbreaks of sporadic violence restricted access for humanitarian operations.

25. The success of the 2003 relief operation in Ethiopia could be credited to many factors, including the effective early warning systems and the generous contributions by donors. In a country where only half the population had adequate food or access to water, it was important to focus further on building capacity so as to deal with the fundamental causes of vulnerability. Local capacity to respond to emergency needs was restricted and the Government should work closely with international donors to mitigate the suffering of the people.

26. A positive future for Liberia depended strongly on long-term peace, not only in Liberia itself but also throughout West Africa. Besides a regional approach to peace, other factors remained vital in the attempt to bolster the peace process in Liberia. One challenge would be to ensure the success of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programme, with the emphasis on reintegration, in particular through the creation of job opportunities. Another high priority was to aid the internally displaced. The rule of law should be re-established and human rights protected. Other challenges that the authorities and the international donor community should face in the short or long term were to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, ensure access to safe water and sanitation and increase agricultural production.

27. The combined effects of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and a weakened institutional capacity, also known as the "triple threat", weighed heavily on the social and economic situation of the people of Southern Africa. In Malawi, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, the food situation had improved, but there was no room for complacency.

National and international efforts in Malawi must focus on increasing the country's capacity to deal with natural disasters, chronic malnutrition due to poverty, HIV/AIDS and other development challenges in the social sectors.

28. The European Union welcomed the recent establishment of the Transitional National Government in Somalia. The prevailing drought, the persistent food insecurity and the problems relating to rehabilitation and reconstruction posed a major challenge for the new government. The European Union stood ready to continue to provide financial and technical support for a provisional, inclusive, broad-based government in Somalia. Years of anarchy, control by warlords and civil strife coupled with cycles of drought and floods had resulted in serious humanitarian needs, notably in relation to health and nutrition. Most Somali households faced a high degree of chronic vulnerability, since local coping mechanisms had been gradually exhausted. The European Union would continue to meet their needs.

29. With regard to the situation in the countries discussed under agenda item 39 (b), in which the humanitarian situation had improved considerably, the Union concurred with the conclusion contained in the Secretary-General's report that the countries should no longer be considered under that agenda item. As for the countries still confronted with humanitarian crises, the Union would continue to participate in the Consolidated Appeals Process, to which it was the largest donor.

30. **Mr. Yao** Wenlong (China) said that the allocation to Main Committees of the General Assembly of such agenda items as the one under consideration made for more focused discussion and that the submission by the Secretary-General of consolidated reports such as the one on humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions (A/59/293) facilitated the task of delegations preparing statements on relevant agenda items.

31. In the aforementioned report, the Secretary-General reviewed the humanitarian assistance and aid given to those countries by the international community over the preceding two years and reported on efforts made by some recipient Governments that had greatly improved the humanitarian and security situation, thus enabling refugees and internally displaced persons to return home. Obviously, however, the main issue bedeviling those countries and regions remained the lack of financial resources. The results of inter-agency appeals to mobilize resources for them had been highly uneven. In some cases, as much as 70 per cent of the planned targets had been achieved in contrast to only 20 per cent in others. For that reason, in some countries where peace had just been restored, financial resources required to rebuild economic infrastructure far exceeded government capacity and in others transiting from relief to development the shortfall in financial resources was holding back the implementation of transitional programmes.

32. China was also a disaster-prone developing country where, every year, such disasters as flooding and earthquakes caused enormous economic damage. It still provided assistance, however, within its capacity, to countries affected by serious natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies. In 2003 for instance, China had provided through bilateral channels 18,000 tonnes of corn to Ethiopia and five other drought-stricken countries. Through UNICEF, it had donated wheelchairs to Angola and emergency relief supplies and other forms of humanitarian assistance to Somali refugees.

33. It was to be hoped that the resolutions relating to humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation for countries and regions adopted every year would be promptly implemented so that the countries afflicted by natural disasters could truly benefit from them. China called on donor countries having the capacity to do so to continue to contribute generously and to provide humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation aid to countries struck by natural disasters or engaged in post-conflict reconstruction, especially the least developed among them.

34. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) said that her country was pleased with the efforts being made to strengthen the coordination of United Nations humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to individual countries or regions. Jamaica, having just witnessed the devastating effect of a major hurricane, was cognizant of the challenges which plagued countries afflicted by natural disasters and of the importance of international assistance in meeting those challenges. She therefore joined other Member States in underscoring the critical role which the Organization and its partners played not only in the provision of humanitarian assistance to countries stricken by disaster or emerging from conflict but also in their reconstruction and development.

While assistance from relief and mitigation to development remained a priority, it was equally important to strengthen national capacities to cope with such developmental challenges as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

35. Jamaica also concurred that such assistance required a multifaceted approach built on a framework of collaboration with all stakeholders to enhance the prospects for long-term sustainable development of the countries and regions involved. It was therefore fitting that the consideration of agenda item 39 (b) had followed so closely on the Committee's deliberations on the coordination and harmonization of United Nations operational activities.

36. The assistance of the international community was critical to ensuring a durable response to all the challenges mentioned in the Secretary-General's reports (A/59/293 and A/59/86-E/2004/69) and enabling the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreed goals to be realized by all countries within the set time frame.

37. **Mr. Alimov** (Tajikistan) said that 2004 marked the seventh anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, instituting a successful process of rehabilitation and peaceful development. During all those years, his country had spared no effort in addressing the most urgent issues of eliminating the consequences of the civil conflict, rebuilding the country and meeting the humanitarian needs of the people, including targeted assistance to socially vulnerable groups such as children, women and internally displaced persons. Those efforts had been broadly supported by the international community. The United Nations General Assembly resolutions on emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan had played a key role in mobilizing international partners by laying a consolidated foundation for seven inter-agency appeals for humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan. The considerable resources mobilized in response to those appeals had been used to cater for the people's humanitarian needs, fund health-care delivery, provide access to safe drinking water and rehabilitate houses damaged during the civil conflict. They had also been used for natural disaster relief — with particular reference to drought, landslides, and earthquakes — which had significantly hampered development. The Government and people of Tajikistan were profoundly grateful to the international community for its invaluable assistance.

38. Through that combination of efforts, the situation in Tajikistan had changed dramatically. Peace and national concord had been achieved and political stability had become irreversible. The humanitarian crisis caused by the civil conflict had been overcome and the country was on its way to sustainable development. The groundwork for a market economy had been laid, economic stability was gaining strength and an investment-friendly environment had been created. The social situation had been improving consistently but the people remained aware that not all the problems had been resolved. The progress achieved in peaceful development needed to be consolidated. Poverty eradication, in particular, remained an urgent concern and the Government of Tajikistan continued to make every possible effort to provide the needed assistance to vulnerable groups in society.

39. The record of recent years proved that Tajikistan's successful resolution of internal conflict and transition to peaceful and sustainable development could serve as an example. Transition was an issue of major importance and, as such, had been discussed more than once at the United Nations. The fact that a country had overcome a severe humanitarian crisis and embarked on the road to development did not obviate its need for international assistance, which remained essential not only for sustaining normal life and eradicating poverty but also for accelerating the pace of development. The key issue, in that case, was to optimize the parameters and modalities of assistance and render them relevant to the stage of development at which that country found itself at a given moment. That approach had been highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/59/293), which emphasized that, even though there might remain some need for humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance, the bulk of international assistance should be channelled into sustainable development.

40. Among the donor countries that had put such an approach into practice was the Russian Federation, with which Tajikistan had recently concluded breakthrough agreements whereby the Russian Federation would be investing two billion dollars over five years in such strategic areas of Tajikistan's economy as hydropower, industry and narcotics control, while granting it a zero-option on its debt.

41. In view of the foregoing, the Government of Tajikistan had decided not to submit a new resolution on emergency international assistance to Tajikistan at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. At the same time, it was important for the countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's report and for the international community as a whole to share the positive experiences gained and to consider mechanisms, instruments and best practices for post-conflict development. In that connection, with due regard for the conclusions drawn by the Secretary-General, he considered it expedient to identify a relevant format for discussing at the United Nations in 2005 the positive experience of post-conflict countries. That could take the form of an informal panel discussion during the preparation for or the holding of the 2005 annual session of the Economic and Social Council. Tajikistan would continue discussing the subject with like-minded countries, the Bureau of the Council and the Secretariat with a view to finding an optimum format.

42. **The Chairman**, replying to the representative of Tajikistan, thanked him for his proposals and recalled that the Committee had just considered the question of humanitarian assistance.

43. It had indeed been examined previously by the General Assembly in a plenary meeting from a general perspective. The Committee would in turn study systematically all aspects of the question and the interrelationship between them. To that end, it would rely on the debate on the question which had taken place in the Economic and Social Council during its recent consideration of humanitarian questions. It could also use the lessons learned by the countries and regions receiving humanitarian assistance, which would allow it to identify the major themes useful to all and even to define reporting rules. It must not lose sight of the fact, however, that the basic issue was development.

44. **Mr. Atoki** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the goals of the rehabilitation, reconstruction and reunification of the Democratic Republic of Congo were being pursued in an extremely difficult economic and social context. The Congolese people were not yet enjoying the peace dividend which was theirs by right, as the significant progress made on the political and economic fronts since the end of the war had not yet produced the desired results. The social and humanitarian situation in particular remained very precarious, as indicated by the very high maternal and child mortality rates, the deterioration of health and social infrastructure, the lack of access to basic health care and education and the malnutrition rampant among children.

45. Despite a slight improvement, the humanitarian situation remained of particular concern in the areas affected by armed conflict, where there were over 4 million displaced persons. As the Secretary-General had stressed in his report (A/59/293), the overall level of funding for humanitarian activities was insufficient.

46. Furthermore, massive human rights violations continued to be committed with complete impunity, especially in the eastern part of the country. Rape of women and girls used as a weapon of war had become commonplace and the murder of heads of households was an everyday occurrence. The social fabric, the medium for development, was being partially destroyed as a result.

47. Given those conditions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would be unable to address all those problems without the indispensable assistance of the entire international community. It therefore especially welcomed the decision of the Security Council to request the Secretary-General, through his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to coordinate all the activities of the United Nations system in its territory. It was also encouraged by the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which had approved the country's multisectoral emergency programme for rehabilitation and reconstruction and its interim poverty reduction strategy paper, two instruments that should allow it to mobilize additional external resources and more easily repair its basic infrastructure, which had been destroyed by many years of mismanagement and war. It attached the highest priority to its continuing cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and the ongoing consolidation and normalization of its relations with most of the donor countries and the bilateral and multilateral lenders, which would be essential in the reform efforts it had undertaken.

48. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, slowly emerging from a long war with a significant impact outside its borders, was particularly aware of the importance of regional and subregional cooperation. In its programmes, his Government was aware of the need to pool the resources of the countries

in the region. It planned to pursue a policy of dialogue, openness, friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness with those countries. It therefore welcomed the forthcoming International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region to be held in the United Republic of Tanzania, which was a prerequisite for the stability of Central Africa and an historic opportunity to be seized to reactivate subregional integration, a factor in peace and socio-economic development.

49. In the spirit of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/59/293), the Democratic Republic of the Congo intended to submit a draft resolution under the current item that would call for the strengthening of cooperation with the United Nations system and would once again urge the international community to support its efforts towards economic recovery, political transition and reunification of its territory, as well as humanitarian assistance to its people, improvements in its methods of governance and its struggle against poverty.

50. **Mr. Monteagegre** (Philippines) said that his country attached great importance to the humanitarian activities of the United Nations and recalled the White Helmets Initiative launched by Argentina a decade earlier and subsequently adopted by the Organization of American States. The Initiative had made a major contribution to development and advancement of voluntary humanitarian initiatives by Member States, regional organizations, NGOs and individuals. The concept had great potential, as a complement to the success of the work of the United Nations Volunteers and other similar humanitarian programmes.

51. The Philippines, with its strong tradition of volunteerism, was particularly impressed with the White Helmets as a model for a national volunteer corps ready for deployment to answer the emergency needs of its neighbours. Since it was supported by national and voluntary contributions, the Initiative would advance the humanitarian agenda of the United Nations without being an additional burden on the Organization's resources. The Philippines planned to establish its own White Helmets system and was working with its armed forces and national police and civil defence authorities as well as volunteer NGOs in order to maximize the use of available resources and to create synergy among the relevant institutions.

52. The United Nations should not lose sight of the value of the White Helmets in humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation efforts, as a component of United Nations peacekeeping operations. They could work alongside the Blue Helmets, particularly in the post-conflict peacebuilding stage. Member States should consider the possibility of making the respective international and regional voluntary bodies into national White Helmets organizations which could serve to expedite the delivery of humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation initiatives to countries and regions undergoing or emerging from conflicts or natural disasters, and regional organizations could look to them for support.

53. **Mr. Gaspar Martins** (Angola) noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had recommended that the situation in countries that had experienced considerable improvement should no longer be considered under agenda item 39. However, the vulnerability of individual countries to crises should be assessed.

54. Although their situation had stabilized, a number of countries still required special assistance in order to diminish their vulnerability and develop lasting solutions to ensure long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. Given that it took decades to undo the destruction and devastation caused by a crisis in a country or region, Angola supported the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning stabilized crisis situations, provided that the international community continued to assist the countries concerned as they embarked on the irreversible path to sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Post-crisis assessment and a monitoring mechanism would provide the international community and the United Nations system with a means of evaluating successes, disseminating best practices and contributing to early warning mechanisms.

55. He expressed concern about the insufficient level of assistance in certain crisis situations. Regardless of whether crises were caused by natural or man-made disasters, affected countries all deserved effective, coordinated and vigorous responses from the international community designed to help them overcome the crisis and to strengthen national measures to reinstate normalcy, stability and security. Such action, which began with emergency humanitarian relief, must culminate in development

assistance. The United Nations Consolidated Appeal Process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework remained the most coordinated and coherent ways of responding to the needs of a given country or region in the event of a crisis. Regrettably, the response to those mechanisms was sometimes insufficient to meet the needs.

56. In Angola, the civil war had led to a humanitarian crisis. Up to four million refugees and internally displaced persons had required emergency relief. In order to consolidate peace, it had been necessary to demobilize, disarm and reintegrate some 250,000 former combatants. To assist the Angolan Government with such a mammoth undertaking, the United Nations had launched the necessary consolidated appeals. Despite significant contributions from several countries, including the United States of America, Sweden and Germany, the funds obtained were insufficient. Angola called on Member States, in particular the donor community, to maintain and increase their contributions to the Consolidated Appeal for Angola and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2005-2008.

57. He pointed out that, despite the existence of government programmes, the spontaneous and unassisted return and resettlement of some refugees and displaced persons had occurred outside the control of the Government, the United Nations system and the non-governmental organizations.

58. The onset of peace in Angola had created an opportunity to implement programmes and strategies designed to bring about sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The Angolan Government had seized that opportunity and had introduced numerous initiatives designed to rehabilitate the economy and the destroyed economic and social infrastructures. It had, inter alia, adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper that identified 10 areas for intervention, namely social reintegration, civil security and protection, food security and rural development, HIV/AIDS, education, health care, basic infrastructure, employment and vocational training, governance and macroeconomic management. The Government had adjusted the national budget to reflect those areas and had also adopted programmes designed to boost the private sector and reconstruct roads and railways. Aware that it was essential to manage its resources effectively, the Angolan Government was concentrating on institutional capacity-building, good governance and transparent management of public resources. It had acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism.

59. In conclusion, he announced that his delegation would be introducing a draft resolution on international assistance for the economic reconstruction of Angola, with a view to reaffirming the need for partnerships between the Angolan Government and the international community in order to consolidate peace and achieve a smooth transition from relief to long-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

60. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) commended the Secretary-General for the reports submitted under the agenda item, in particular the report on assistance to Mozambique (A/59/86-E/2004/69).

61. He welcomed the manner in which humanitarian activities were being carried out and reaffirmed the position taken by his delegation at the previous session of the Economic and Social Council that humanitarian assistance should create national capacities in the countries concerned. There must be emphasis on empowering local communities and enabling them to spearhead the humanitarian assistance process while the international community played a supporting role. In that context, priority must be given to developing disaster prevention, mitigation and management capacities, which might prove to be cost effective and reduce as far as possible the destruction of infrastructure and the number of victims.

62. With reference to the Secretary-General's report on assistance to Mozambique, he underlined the seriousness of the compounding effects of HIV/AIDS, which mainly affected the most productive age group of the population, and repeated natural disasters. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had estimated that, by 2020, 20 per cent of Mozambique's agricultural labour force would be lost to HIV/AIDS and that life expectancy in that country could drop to 36 years by 2010. An increasing number of children were being orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis, which further increased the vulnerability of the population. Since humanitarian problems were all interrelated, the pandemic must be combated in an integrated manner and, in addition to emergency relief, humanitarian activities must have a development dimension.

63. The fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis made an important contribution to peace

and stability. Consequently, the Government of Mozambique was taking vigorous measures in that area. Its activities also focused on strengthening democracy and national reconciliation and promoting economic growth and socio-economic development. The Government was also implementing the National Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, fighting poverty, enhancing governance capacities and diminishing vulnerability.

64. Mozambique's vulnerability stemmed mainly from underdevelopment and the weakness of its national capacity. He stressed the importance of the transition from humanitarian relief to development aid, since humanitarian relief activities were often carried out in tandem with long-term recovery and development programmes. Only development would make the population less vulnerable and less dependent on emergency assistance, by providing recipient countries with the opportunity to develop the necessary tools to face future disasters.

65. His delegation would be submitting a draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique, which would give the international community an opportunity to review the progress made by Mozambique in the area of development over the past two years. The draft resolution would make it possible to strengthen the legal and political framework for cooperation and assistance to that country. It would also describe the major political, economic and social challenges facing Mozambique.

66. Mozambique's development partners played a critical role in assisting the country as it embarked on the road to progress. Maintaining that assistance would be essential to ensure the sustainability of the political, economic and social gains made so far. While Mozambique was moving away from emergency relief towards long-term development, its reconstruction and development assistance needs were still significant. A sound and creative approach must therefore be found in order to assist the country to lay the foundations for steady, irreversible and sustainable development.

67. He recalled that Mozambique would be holding its third multiparty general elections on 1 and 2 December 2004.

68. **Ms. Andriaanse** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) would make a statement on humanitarian assistance in general at the plenary meeting on 11 November 2004. Under agenda item 34 (b) of the Second Committee, it would address the situation in acutely vulnerable countries.

69. In order to successfully coordinate humanitarian assistance, it was vital to include local communities and to take into account their actual needs and wants. Before providing humanitarian assistance, IFRC endeavoured to design a Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS) for each country, specifying its humanitarian needs. The Strategy took into account the circumstances of the country concerned, in particular its culture and traditions. Whenever possible, it also took into account the capacities and talents of national partners outside the Red Cross and Red Crescent network, the most important of which was the Government. She described the Strategy for Ethiopia.

70. The Federation attached great importance to coordination and cooperation with qualified national and local actors. Much of the debate on agenda item 39 had focused on external assistance, without reference to sustainability or national capacity. She took the view that the most effective way of obtaining lasting results from coordinated assistance was to attribute greater importance to local capacity and its strengthening. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals would also depend on the involvement of vulnerable populations in the design and implementation of programmes.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

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Chairman: Mr. Ramadan (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Lebanon)
later: Mr. Balarezo ..... (Peru)

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04-59710 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 9.55 a.m.

Agenda item 88: Groups of countries in special situations (A/59/115 and A/59/158)

(a) Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/59/94-E/2004/77)

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (A/59/208)

1. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/59/94-E/2004/77), said that the least developed countries (LDCs), which were heavily indebted and accounted for only a small share of world trade, remained marginalized in the process of globalization. Those countries had a poor and uneducated population, high mortality rates and a high HIV prevalence rate, and they lacked basic infrastructure and access to information and technology. They therefore remained vulnerable to external economic shocks, natural disasters, communicable diseases and civil strife and conflict.

2. Although only rapid economic growth would enable them to rise out of poverty, very few LDCs had managed to raise their GDP to 7 per cent and their investment rate to 25 per cent, the targets set under the Brussels Programme of Action. With domestic savings frozen and tax collection also extremely low, reliance on external finance remained high in the LDCs.

3. Official development assistance (ODA) could help the LDCs to achieve the targets of the Brussels Programme of Action. Many commitments had been made on both sides (by the donor countries, to harmonize their aid policies taking into account the priorities of the recipient countries, and by the LDCs, to manage and utilize development aid more effectively), but those commitments had not been kept. Official development assistance had increased insignificantly and had not been fully untied. Moreover, the aid allocated for economic infrastructure and the productive sector had significantly declined, although infrastructure was critical to the productive sector and to trade, which was an important engine of growth and of a vibrant economy. Preferential agreements had been concluded but they remained underutilized, owing to a lack of trade-related capacity and to non-tariff barriers, notably rules of origin and product standards. Donor countries applied contradictory trade policies, taking away with one hand what they gave with the other. Agricultural subsidies undermined the productivity and competitiveness of LDCs and deprived them of their fundamental rights, namely, freedom to trade and the right to development. It was imperative to put the Doha Development Agenda on the right track in order to address trade-distorting policies and practices comprehensively.

4. The imminent liberalization of the textile trade could deal another blow to the already weak economies of the least developed countries. Millions of jobs which were the only source of income for poor families could disappear, penalizing countries that produced value-added products and discouraging others from embarking on the path of diversification. Easing the rules of origin for LDC exports, providing financial and technical assistance to LDCs affected by the elimination of quotas, extending preferences for textile and clothing from LDCs and refocusing other trade preferences were some ways of significantly mitigating the harsh impact of the phase-out. Increased South-South trade with LDC participation was another.

5. There was a remarkable correlation between the export trade structure and the external debt of the least developed countries. Most countries that were dependent on non-oil primary commodities had unsustainable external debt and low export growth rates. As they became further indebted, they fell into the poverty trap. Debt servicing reduced resources for public investment, deterred private investment and damaged growth prospects. Many LDCs participating in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative had reached the completion point, but their external debt remained unsustainable and continued to hinder their development. Only the full cancellation of their external debt could enable the least developed countries to break out of their poverty.

6. Three years after the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action, which was based on the principle of genuine cooperation between all stakeholders — governments, parliaments, civil society and the private sector — its implementation was weak. A significant breakthrough in the areas of trade, aid and external debt was needed in order to achieve the goals of the Brussels Programme.

7. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/59/208), under agenda item 88 (b), he said that the geographical difficulties faced by landlocked developing countries were a major constraint in their development. Excessive transport costs were a more insidious dampener of international trade than tariffs and limited their development prospects, by diminishing export profits and inflating the prices of imported inputs. Moreover, high trade transaction costs were also less likely to attract private capital. Landlocked developing countries found themselves among the poorest developing countries, beset as they were with anaemic growth rates and deteriorating social conditions. Economic stagnation explained their abysmal scores on human development indicators. Given the low levels of exports and foreign direct investment, landlocked developing countries had to rely on official development assistance. Although such assistance to those countries had increased, they often had to use it to meet their most pressing needs, at the expense of the economic infrastructure, including transport and communications, which were essential to trade development.

8. To expedite the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action on transit transport cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries, the organizations in the United Nations system had drawn up a road map for implementation, which established certain areas for immediate action, including the identification of major missing links in Africa, Asia and Latin America; the creation of subregional priority projects to develop infrastructure and facilitate trade; the establishment of national trade facilitation boards; and the promotion of accession to international conventions on transit and transport.

9. The regional commissions played a major role in those efforts. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had promoted the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, which would cover 140,000 kilometres of highways integrating countries spread across the region. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) had drawn up a Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Programme which included an action plan that would allow for the observation of abnormal practices along transit corridors; the monitoring of port security and road safety; the harmonization of transit transport documents; and capacity-building for transport planning specialists. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) continued to provide technical assistance to the landlocked and transit countries in Central Asia and to promote international conventions related to transit trade, explaining the benefits derived from such conventions and the legal actions required for becoming parties to them. The World Bank was working on a number of levels. On the one hand, it was collaborating with the World Customs Organization to streamline customs procedures and, on the other, it was assisting with projects aimed at improving infrastructure and streamlining transit arrangements, facilitating border-crossing operations and implementing interregional transit agreements. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had launched three technical assistance projects to design and implement regional solutions in selected transport corridors in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

10. In his report, the Secretary-General had outlined a number of recommendations, including those pertaining to the improvement of market access and the strengthening of infrastructure and regulatory and institutional systems; closer cooperative arrangements between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours, with the participation of regional economic groupings and bilateral arrangements; transit policy reforms to lower costs through the commercialization and liberalization of transport services; increased financial assistance to landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries, a major proportion of which should be allocated to infrastructure investment; allowing national governments to be in the driver's seat, with the participation of trade facilitation boards to bring together all the major stakeholders in the public and private sectors to consider issues related to the establishment of efficient trade facilitation systems and transit transport; and the provision of increased coordinated technical assistance by United Nations organizations. In that regard, the Secretary-General had invited donors to make voluntary contributions to the

trust fund that he had established to facilitate the implementation of and follow-up to the Almaty Conference.

11. **The Chairman**, recalling that the Brussels Programme of Action encouraged a people-centred policy, asked the High Representative if landlocked developing countries and the least developed countries should not therefore align their poverty reduction strategy on the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those concerning human beings (reduction in the number of people living on less than $1 a day, sustainable access to water and lower mortality rates).

12. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) confirmed that the first of the seven commitments entered into in Brussels focused on human beings as a factor to be borne in mind if countries wished to eradicate poverty, attain the Millennium Development Goals and achieve economic take-off. The Secretary-General's report described all the obstacles encountered by the LDCs, their achievements and the support they received or expected from the international community. Since the Millennium Development Goals had been incorporated into the Brussels Programme of Action, which had been adopted one year after the Millennium Summit, the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals depended on the implementation of the Programme of Action. All LDCs must therefore take account of that correlation when drawing up their poverty reduction strategy papers. Some countries which had completed their strategy papers had done so, but others had not. The Office of the High Representative was striving to ensure that all countries did so as a matter of course.

13. **The Chairman** enquired as to the role of the regional commissions in the context of the Almaty Programme of Action and how that role could be strengthened.

14. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that the Almaty Programme of Action attached great importance to the role of the regional commissions, with which his Office cooperated closely. The regional commissions and the subregional organizations of Africa, Asia and Latin America were actively working on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The conference which his Office would be convening in 2005 would enable all those organizations to coordinate their support for the landlocked developing countries and neighbouring transit countries. Given that donors were also expected to participate, he requested all those organizations to submit specific proposals to the conference.

15. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the LDCs constituted the weakest segment of the international community, since they had the lowest growth rates among the developing countries. Although they bore the primary responsibility for their own development, the international community must back their efforts. The world leaders who had participated in the Millennium Summit in 2000 had acknowledged that responsibility and had undertaken to address the special needs of those countries. It must be admitted that the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which had been adopted three years earlier, had not yielded the expected results. For example, development partners were a long way from meeting the target of devoting between 0.15 per cent and 0.20 per cent of their GNP to official development assistance. The trade preferences granted to the LDCs remained underutilized owing to non-tariff barriers, and the export subsidies given by some developed countries prevented the full participation of LDCs in international trade. The LDCs continued to suffer from a crushing debt burden, which weakened social protection, exacerbated conflicts and contributed to the spread of the AIDS pandemic.

16. It was therefore necessary to act on the conclusions of the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2004, at which the Council had called for an enabling environment in the LDCs and the mobilization of resources in order to put the Brussels Programme of Action into effect. In that context, the Group of 77 and China intended to submit a draft resolution which would explore ways of speeding up the implementation of the Programme of Action so that its targets could be met on time.

17. With reference to agenda item 88 (b), he said that, despite technological advances in the transport sector, landlocked developing countries still faced structural challenges which impeded their access to

world markets. Since Kazakhstan, for example, was 3,750 kilometres from the sea and Afghanistan, Chad, Niger, Zambia and Zimbabwe were more than 2,000 kilometres inland, their goods spent an extremely long time in transit through other countries and the resultant high transport costs eroded the competitive edge of their products. According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the landlocked developing countries devoted a much larger proportion of their export earnings to payment for transport and insurance services than other countries.

18. In order to overcome those difficulties, which slowed down the economic growth of the landlocked developing countries, it was essential to implement the Almaty Programme of Action fully. In particular, the international community must assist those countries and the transit countries in establishing efficient transit transport and trade facilitation systems and diversifying their exports. That assistance should be accompanied by more technical assistance which would enable the landlocked developing countries to improve their communication and institutional infrastructure. Infrastructure development would boost their competitiveness and attract more foreign direct investment and other forms of investment.

19. Given the constraints imposed by high transport costs and complex transit operations, the landlocked developing countries ought to derive the greatest benefit from measures to be elaborated by the newly established Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation. In that regard, the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries again urged the World Trade Organization (WTO) to expedite its Work Programme on Small Economies, which included those countries. Furthermore, the WTO negotiations on market access should pay particular attention to products of special interest to those countries, as called for in the Almaty Programme of Action and the São Paulo Consensus.

20. **Mr. van den Akker** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey, the stabilization and association process countries and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro and of Iceland as a member of the European Free Trade Association and the European Economic Area, said that the sustainable development of the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries lay at the heart of the European Union's development activities, which were predicated on the international community's development agenda and were specifically aimed at giving effect to the Millennium Declaration.

21. The European Union, which had hosted the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Brussels in 2001, remained fully committed to a universal trade system which was open, equitable and rules-based and which did not discriminate against the products of the least developed countries. It was in that spirit that, in 2001, it had taken measures exempting those products from customs duties and quotas and, in 2004, it had adopted an action plan on agricultural products, dependence and poverty and had concluded a partnership on cotton with the African countries, under which no restrictions could be placed on cotton imports and no subsidies could be given to exports of community cotton fibres on the world market. The European Union had met the target for official development assistance to the LDCs, since its Member States devoted an average of between 0.15 per cent and 0.20 per cent of their GNP to such assistance.

22. The European Union recognized that remoteness and isolation from world markets were among the main causes of the relative poverty of the landlocked developing countries. The introduction of efficient transit systems and transit policy reforms, competition between different modes of transport, financial and technical assistance for the improvement of infrastructure and the maintenance of existing facilities were all essential if their situation was to be improved. The European Union therefore encouraged landlocked and transit countries to give priority to those issues in their development plans, budgets and poverty reduction strategy papers.

23. One of the main objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action was to increase the participation of landlocked developing countries in world trade. The European Union was convinced that progress would be made in that direction during the Doha round, especially with regard to services and agricultural and non-agricultural products. The recent launching in Doha of negotiations on trade facilitation, which explicitly dealt with the clarification and improvement of WTO rules on transit, offered a golden opportunity to negotiate new provisions that would first and foremost benefit landlocked developing countries.

24. South-South cooperation and regional cooperation were crucial to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. Regional and subregional organizations played an important role in fostering economic activity, in particular by strengthening regional cooperation initiatives and promoting the conclusion of agreements between transit countries and landlocked developing countries. In that regard, the European Union strongly supported the New Partnership for Africa's Development as a framework for developing regional transport. Moreover, the European Union, through its Economic Partnership Agreements, supplied financial and technical assistance in the determination of sustainable policies and strategies and the establishment of transport infrastructure and services and multimodal regional networks from which landlocked developing countries benefited.

25. The European Union was grateful to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the guidance it had provided during the preparation of the road map for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. Coherent, coordinated assistance to landlocked developing countries was vital to the full implementation of the Programme.

26. The European Union supported the ministerial communiqué issued by the landlocked developing countries at the eleventh session of UNCTAD and the statement they had adopted at their Ministerial Meeting in New York. UNCTAD had a leading role to play, in close cooperation with the other relevant organizations within the United Nations system, in particular through programmes of technical cooperation with the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries. The European Union fully supported the endeavours of United Nations agencies in that sphere.

27. **Mr. Wenlong Yao** (China) said that the LDCs were seriously hampered in their economic and social development by a variety of domestic and external factors. Besides suffering from poor economic infrastructure, epidemic diseases and, in cases, geographical remoteness, they also faced severe shortages of investments and skilled manpower. As a result, they risked being further marginalized at a time of globalization.

28. Even as the economies of the major developed countries had recovered in recent years and international trade had shown sustained growth, the LDCs had seen their international trade slow down. Although their official development assistance (ODA) inflows had increased since 2000, real net per capita aid inflows had remained lower than in the 1990s. Their plight had been further compounded by an increasingly heavy debt burden and deteriorating terms of trade.

29. To address that, the majority of LDCs had formulated economic strategies and were actively pursuing the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action, but they could not emerge unaided from the dire situation in which they found themselves. It was therefore the responsibility of the international community to assist them in the areas of poverty eradication, capacity-building and economic development.

30. For the first time, the Economic and Social Council had devoted its high-level segment on humanitarian affairs to the LDCs and had adopted a ministerial declaration which showed the importance that the international community attached to their problems. His delegation welcomed that declaration and called upon the developed donor countries to devote from 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) to ODA disbursements to LDCs as soon as possible, in accordance with the Brussels Programme of Action. The developed countries must also offer further debt relief to the LDCs, particularly to the heavily indebted poor countries so that they could devote their limited resources to development; offer preferential treatment for the major export products of the LDCs, especially their agricultural products; and help the LDCs to integrate into and benefit from the multilateral trading system.

31. The preferential trade arrangements offered by the developed countries to the LDCs could alleviate their development problems by way of the benefits yielded in increased employment and income for the LDCs. However, not being adequately equipped to use such preferential measures to promote development, the LDCs benefited little from such schemes. The international community must therefore help the LDCs to take full advantage of those measures by offering them technical assistance and help in capacity-building. Similarly, the developed countries should

encourage their enterprises to increase their investment in the LDCs so that more of the latter could benefit from foreign direct investment.

32. The Chinese Government had always supported the legitimate demands and propositions of the LDCs for poverty eradication and economic and social development and had assisted them within its means. Over the past 50 years, China had provided various forms of technical assistance and aid-in-kind to a majority of the LDCs and had helped them to complete more than 800 major projects in the agricultural, textile, energy, transport, health and educational sectors. In addition to reducing or cancelling the debts of 31 African LDCs, as well as the matured debts of a number of Asian LDCs, it was actively helping the LDCs to develop their human resources and negotiating with African LDCs tariff exemptions for some of their exports.

33. Since the General Assembly had endorsed the Almaty Programme of Action in 2003, much had been done by various organizations within the United Nations system to disseminate the Programme of Action and formulate a road map for its implementation. His delegation believed that the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would require the joint efforts of all stakeholders, especially the developed donor countries, United Nations organizations, international financial institutions and landlocked and transit developing countries. In that regard, he welcomed the efforts that landlocked and transit developing countries were making in a joint bid to develop transit transport services. It was to be hoped that the developed donor countries and international financial and development assistance institutions could provide landlocked and transit developing countries with the financial, human and technical assistance they would need to construct transit transport corridors.

34. As a transit developing country, China understood the particular difficulties faced by landlocked developing countries. China supported them in their economic development, particularly through trade, economic and technical cooperation and the provision of transit transport services on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

35. Allowing all countries, particularly developing countries, to manage their own development had always been China's fundamental outlook on development. As China continued to open up to the rest of the world and with the growth of its economy, it would be able to provide more assistance and make greater contributions to the economic and social development of developing countries, particularly the least developed and landlocked developing countries.

36. **Mr. Aho-glele** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, noted that, three years after it had been adopted, the rate of implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 remained very slow. Measures must be taken to speed up its implementation if the targets set by the LDCs and their development partners were to be met by the end of the decade. In that context, the international community might wish to focus on working out a set of practical measures for meeting the commitments entered into under the Brussels Programme of Action. In that regard, the Secretary-General could designate lead agencies for each of the seven commitments in the Programme of Action so as to mobilize the efforts of development partners on specific sectors with a view to the implementation of the Programme, along the lines of the donor round tables that UNDP organized in respect of development programmes at the country level. Arrangements would also have to be made to convene a mid-term implementation review meeting to give the Programme a fresh boost.

37. Before then, the high-level segment held in 2005, which would conduct a mid-term review of the Millennium Development Goals, could also be used to assess the progress made in meeting the concerns of the LDCs. Moreover, the question of the participation of the LDC central focal points in the review of the Programme of Action to be conducted at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council remained an urgent one. In that regard, the Secretary-General would have to implement the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 58/228 and secure the effective participation of the delegations concerned.

38. **Mr. Strømmen** (Norway) said that the gross domestic product of the least developed countries was increasing, but the goal of 7 per cent growth for those countries set in the Brussels Programme of Action was far from being met. In his report (A/59/94), the Secretary-General had indicated that the number of people living in extreme poverty in the least developed

countries would increase from 334 million in 2000 to 471 million in 2015 if current trends continued.

39. To respond to that trend, least developed countries needed sound policies and good governance at all levels and must combat corruption and invest in their infrastructure in order to combat poverty, but the donor countries must also assist them in their efforts. It was clear that those countries needed greater international support in the areas of development assistance, debt relief and market access if the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of the Programme of Action were to be met. Norway had made the least developed countries the target group for its official development assistance; they were its main development partners. It had long since exceeded the goal of devoting 0.2 per cent of its GDP to official development assistance to those countries, which had received 42 per cent of its bilateral aid in 2003.

40. As for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, 15 countries had reached the completion point and 27 countries were enjoying substantial debt relief under the Initiative, which was showing concrete results. Its future financing must be secured in order to work for improved debt sustainability of the least developed countries.

41. Developing countries, particularly least developed countries, needed improved market access in order to avoid debt and achieve sustainable growth. Norway was participating actively in those efforts and had granted duty-free and quota-free access to its markets for their products in 2002. Advanced developing countries should also improve market access for their exports through the Generalized System of Trade Preferences, an important means of promoting South-South cooperation and trade.

42. Norway was a major supporter of the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to the least developed countries, the Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Programme for African countries and the various trust funds for technical assistance in UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre and WTO. They were intended to develop production and trade capacity and expand employment opportunity as well as to address constraints on supply capacity from a coordinated and coherent approach.

43. Developing countries needed to develop a stable and predictable framework for private sector development and investment. Some countries had succeeded in increasing the volume of foreign direct investment, but many still lagged behind. According to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, most had updated their investment laws and provided adequate incentives for foreign direct investment.

44. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that, amid unprecedented global prosperity, the poor were increasingly vulnerable. The 700 million people in the least developed countries were being further marginalized, despite their considerable efforts to honour their commitments.

45. When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, it was a country ravaged by war. It had made significant progress since then: currently it had one of the highest primary school enrolment rates in the developing world and had cut infant mortality in half over the past two decades. The population growth rate had also been reduced at unprecedented speed. Those successes were owed to a prudent mix of socio-economic strategies, sound macroeconomic management, appropriate use of external support, the emergence of a vibrant civil society, and especially, the development of local innovations like microcredit and non-formal education. The achievements in the social sector, however, would not be sustainable without a commensurate level of economic development. In the view of the World Bank, Bangladesh was one of the few among the least developed countries which was likely to meet all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It had already met some of those goals, but reaching the target for reduction of income poverty remained contingent on the external environment of aid and trade.

46. Aid could play a crucial role in capacity-building in the least developed countries. It was therefore of critical importance that their partners should fulfil their commitment of devoting 0.15 per cent of their GDP to those countries. Long-term foreign private capital played a complementary and catalytic role in strengthening local production capacity, encouraging export growth, technology and skills transfer, job creation and poverty eradication. One of the most effective means of assisting the least developed countries would be, therefore, to channel foreign direct investment to them.

47. There was huge potential to convert the population into a resource. A large community of Bangladeshis worked abroad, and contributed to the country's economic development through their remittances. Its development partners could explore means of recruiting skilled and semi-skilled labour from least developed countries on a temporary basis, thus helping to ease their resource constraints.

48. Bangladesh, though not a heavily indebted country, must still service its debt, and it still felt the drag on its resources. Cancelling the debt of least developed countries would release resources that could be used to build productive capacity. The serious debt problems of least developed countries required a comprehensive solution.

49. The least developed countries were determined to give their people a better quality of life. They had achieved some results, but they acknowledged that there was a long way to go. One major impediment was the scarcity of resources. The global community had made a certain number of commitments in response to the concept of partnership, which must be honoured.

50. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan) said that she supported the recommendations contained in the report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as well as the action-oriented nature of the Programme. The recently adopted road map would further forge partnerships for the implementation of the Programme. In that regard she commended the efforts of the High Representative and his team.

51. Despite regional and national variations in impact, the problems facing landlocked countries and the solutions to such problems were common to all the countries concerned. Distance and dependence on passage through the territory of another State remained constant problems which reduced the competitiveness of landlocked countries and significantly hampered not only their growth and development, but ultimately their integration into the world economy. They were also dependent on the infrastructure and administrative barriers of third countries. Bilateral trade arrangements, the simplification of cross-border procedures and the establishment of trade facilitation boards were important tools and regional cooperation in that connection should therefore be further explored. The establishment of friendly relations among States was a fundamental prerequisite for transport, regional integration and trade.

52. Azerbaijan was actively engaged in the development of transregional transport corridors, among which the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) occupied a special position. Under the TRACECA Programme, targeted efforts were under way to create an enabling transit environment, as a result of which the volume of trade was increasing.

53. Azerbaijan was also part of the North-South transport network, through which it could secure its shortest route to the sea. However, owing to the unresolved conflict with and territorial claims of its neighbouring State, Armenia, which had resulted in the occupation of seven districts of Azerbaijan, transport costs remained burdensome, not only for Azerbaijan but also for the States parties to the Agreement on the North-South International Transport Corridor. Given the distances involved, enormous capital flows would be needed for the construction of a pipeline as an alternative route to the sea.

54. Azerbaijan valued the initiatives of the United Nations regional commissions, in particular the Joint Project of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which could serve as an appropriate framework for consolidating and coordinating the efforts of the landlocked developing countries in the region. She commended the work of UNCTAD on transit transport cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa and said that Azerbaijan would welcome the expansion of such an initiative to the South Caucasus.

55. The low share of landlocked developing countries in international trade was a matter for concern. Moreover, their disadvantaged situation could lead to their further marginalization in terms of both international trade and the global economy. It was therefore vital for the international community to support the efforts of those countries to gain greater market access, particularly within the framework of WTO.

56. **Mr. Mpundu** (Zambia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the representative of Benin on behalf of the least developed countries and the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the landlocked developing countries.

57. The measures taken by Zambia, which was both a landlocked and a least developed country, to implement the Brussels Programme of Action included the establishment of a focal point for least developed countries under the Ministry of Finance and National Planning. In addition, the Government was implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Zambia's economy was one of the most liberalized in the southern Africa region. While doing its utmost to implement the Brussels Programme of Action, it was also struggling with the external debt burden. The international market prices for its main exports of copper, sugar and coffee were falling as a result of unfavourable trading patterns. Moreover, owing to high transport costs, its exports were less competitive on the world market.

58. He emphasized the importance of the seven commitments contained in the Brussels Programme of Action and was gratified to note that United Nations agencies were taking them into account. Landlocked developing countries were among the poorest of all developing countries, had limited capacities and were highly dependent on a limited number of commodities for their export earnings. Lack of access to the sea and isolation from world markets exacerbated their poverty and increased the transport cost for exports and imports.

59. In view of the urgent need for the international community to recognize the problems of landlocked developing countries, the Almaty Programme of Action had been adopted in 2003. It aimed to secure access for those countries to and from the sea, reduce their costs and improve services to enhance the competitiveness of their exports and reduce the delivery cost of their imports.

60. *Mr. Balarezo (Peru) resumed the Chair.*

61. **Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/59/208) and commended the Office of the High Representative for the leading role which it had played in preparing the road map for the implementation of that Programme. He also expressed appreciation for the work of UNCTAD, as described in the report, and welcomed the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, signed in 2004 in Shanghai (China), which would significantly boost regional economic cooperation and trade.

62. The Group of Landlocked Developing Countries was indebted to all donors and development partners for their assistance to those countries in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and implement the Almaty Programme of Action. It renewed its appeal to them to contribute to the trust fund established to facilitate the implementation of and follow-up to the Almaty Programme of Action. It urged the Office of the High Representative to continue to mobilize and coordinate international support and to promote the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, in accordance with the mandate conferred upon it by the General Assembly. It was essential to strengthen the Office so that it could carry out its mandate effectively.

63. A recent study by the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation pointed out that the distinct problems of the landlocked developing countries were related to their geographical location and created severe disadvantages, principally in regard to trade. Those disadvantages included high access costs, competition from transit States which exported the same products, poor competitiveness and lack of attraction for foreign direct investment. After referring to the numerous difficulties faced by landlocked developing countries, in particular transport costs, he said that any most-favoured nation tariff reduction that was applied to WTO members did not offer the same benefit to landlocked developing countries as to countries with better transport facilities.

64. Exports from landlocked developing countries had to be transported through transit countries before they could be shipped to the importing country. That resulted in additional costs and further delays, depending on the transport, institutional and human infrastructure of the transit country. Landlocked developing countries confronted major structural disadvantages in meeting world market requirements in terms of reliability and flexibility. Since transport costs were among the most important criteria when it came to selecting a location for foreign direct investment, landlocked developing countries frequently failed to receive consideration as potential hosts for such investment. Most of the exports from those countries consisted of a limited number of primary commodities which were subject to short-term volatility and long-term price decline. The resilience of landlocked

developing countries to endure and recover from external shocks was therefore low.

65. The full implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action was essential. It was important, in particular, to assist both landlocked and transit developing countries to establish efficient transit transport and trade facilitation systems and to promote export diversification. Such measures, however, should be combined with increased technical assistance aimed at enhancing the communication, institutional and human infrastructure of those countries. WTO should expedite its work programme on small economies, which included landlocked developing countries. The parties to the WTO negotiations on market access should also devote particular attention to products of special interest to landlocked developing countries, as recommended in the Almaty Programme of Action and the São Paulo Consensus.

66. **Mr. Der Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the representative of Benin on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries and the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

67. A road map had been adopted by the landlocked developing countries with the support of partners interested in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. After long negotiations conducted by Benin, the Group of Least Developed Countries had succeeded in persuading the Economic and Social Council to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of a resolution on a smooth transition strategy for the countries emerging from the status of least developed countries.

68. The least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries were endeavouring to surmount the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment by committing themselves to economic growth, competitiveness and the strengthening of democratic governance. However, alone they could not overcome the structural weaknesses that were impeding their development. Those countries did not have the necessary financial resources to implement their development projects. They should therefore receive support from bilateral and multilateral donors within the framework of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action.

69. As a landlocked country on the list of least developed countries, Burkina Faso was working to strengthen is partnership base with its development partners. In recent years, various actions had been undertaken with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank on such matters as economic policy, an analysis of public expenditures, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP). That cooperation presented persistent problems, however, such as the lack of coordination of the various actions and the limited national capacity to plan, carry out, monitor and evaluate projects and programmes.

70. His delegation supported the proposal of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, who had invited the least developed countries to include the seven commitments under the Brussels Programme of Action within their national development frameworks and poverty reduction strategy papers. It also supported the Secretary-General's recommendation for the creation of national transport and trade facilitation boards by the landlocked developing countries.

71. **Mr. Dembélé** (Mali) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He regretted that the least developed countries were, more than ever, marginalized in the international system, owing to the extreme poverty of the majority of the population, inadequate infrastructure, the stagnation of official development assistance (ODA), the persistence of the external debt crisis, fluctuations in the prices of primary commodities, and the difficulties of access to markets in the developed countries. Faced with that situation, the least developed countries had undertaken many initiatives with a view to improving the living conditions of their populations. In 2002, the Government of Mali had adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as a reference document for its medium-term development policies and strategies. That document was inspired by the national report prepared for the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries and took into account the concerns expressed in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the

Decade 2001-2010. The vast decentralization process launched in 1992 by the Government also shared that same interest in good governance in the service of development. Although it was a voluntary measure, it nevertheless required support from the international community.

72. With respect to the Almaty Programme of Action, he said it was regrettable that the landlocked developing countries were generally among the poorest. The basic objective of the Programme of Action was to establish partnerships so as to address the problems of the landlocked developing countries resulting from the lack of access to the sea, isolation and distance from the chief world markets — factors which contributed to their marginalization and to a low level of participation in international trade.

73. In the case of Mali, the distance from the coasts seriously hindered its ability to obtain supplies, and gave rise to excessive transport costs which impaired the competitiveness of its few export products. That geographical situation — along with other factors — explained the fragility of the national economy, especially in times of crisis. Mali had concluded bilateral transport and transit agreements with its coastal neighbours. It had also made significant financial efforts to improve the infrastructure for liaison with neighbouring transit countries and to modernize its communications systems.

74. The implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action would ensure the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals for the groups of countries in special situations, which included Mali.

75. His delegation reiterated its full support for efforts undertaken by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. It invited the donor community to support that Office so that it could help to mobilize the necessary international assistance.

76. **Mr. Sunaga** (Japan) said that effective poverty reduction required a multifaceted approach that addressed not only the needs of the State but also those of individuals and communities. That was why Japan was promoting the concept of "human security". On his country's initiative, the United Nations had established a Trust Fund for Human Security, through which Japan supported various projects for assisting individuals in developing countries. For instance, in Sierra Leone, Japan was helping farmers to expand the cultivation of Nerica, a hybrid strain of rice that combined the best traits of African and Asian varieties. In Burundi, Japan was assisting internally displaced persons to restore food production in their communities.

77. Japan welcomed the fact that Nepal and Cambodia had joined WTO, the first LDCs to do so. Their entry into that Organization had been facilitated by the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to LDCs which, among other things, aimed at assisting LDCs to expand their participation in the global economy. The world trading system needed to become more inclusive, taking into account the aspirations of LDCs and allowing them to share in the benefits of globalization. From that perspective, the entry of Nepal and Cambodia into WTO constituted a significant step forward.

78. With regard to the landlocked developing countries, substantial progress had been made towards achieving the goals of the Almaty Programme of Action. Japan remained an active partner in the efforts being made by those countries to implement the Programme and believed that the "Central Asia plus Japan" dialogue, which had been launched recently, would contribute to the implementation of the Programme.

79. In the current deliberations on landlocked developing countries, it was important to stress that the development of infrastructure was indispensable in order to eliminate constraints on international trade. In order to ensure smooth and efficient border crossing and customs procedures, coherent and standardized rules and regulations were needed. Regional cooperation must also be fostered in order for the landlocked developing countries and transit countries to form mutually advantageous partnerships that would stimulate economic growth.

80. Japan recognized that the challenges facing LDCs and landlocked developing countries required special attention and efforts on the part of the international community. For its part, Japan remained steadfastly committed to working with those countries in order to address their needs more effectively.

81. **Mr. Ouane** (Director of the Special Programme on the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, United Nations Conference on Trade and

Development) deplored the fact that 30 years after their special status had been established, the economic and social conditions of the LDCs, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States had not improved.

82. *The Least Developed Countries Report, 2004*, published by UNCTAD, remained the only publication within the United Nations system that focused exclusively on the development challenges and prospects of those countries. It provided an in-depth analysis of the relationship between international trade and poverty reduction and contributed to a better understanding of the difficulties of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the LDCs. The Report had three main messages. First, special efforts would have to be made to reduce poverty, taking into account the depth and persistence of underdevelopment in those countries. Second, the current policies at both the national and international levels had proved insufficient to meet the challenge. Third, efforts should be made to identify constructive alternatives which built upon existing national and global processes and made international trade a more effective mechanism for development and poverty reduction.

83. In recent years, the economic performance of the LDCs had not been robust enough to trigger poverty reduction in a majority of those countries. Only seven LDCs had achieved the 7 per cent minimum real growth required for that to happen. In most LDCs, poverty had remained stable or had increased. If that trend were to continue, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day would increase to 471 million in 2015. Not surprisingly, social indicators were not encouraging and most LDCs were not on target to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

84. During the opening of the current session of the General Assembly, world leaders had also expressed their concern about the lack of tangible progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Those alarming reminders called for a new approach to development, which, in the opinion of UNCTAD, should be based on three pillars. First, a development strategy should be devised that would both mainstream trade in poverty reduction and mainstream trade and development in the poverty eradication effort. That would require balanced development, based on agricultural productivity growth, export-led industrialization of processed agricultural products, diversification through management of mineral resources and employment-intensive technologies. Second, the international trade regime should be improved in order to reduce the constraints on development in the LDCs. In that connection, commodity dependence deserved special attention. The member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) should rapidly phase out agricultural support measures that adversely affected LDC exports and measures should be taken to reduce the vulnerability of the LDCs to price shocks by making aid more countercyclical. Third, there was a need for financial and technical support to promote supply and trading capacities in the LDCs.

85. According to the 2004 UNCTAD Report, the LDCs had been engaged in a process of trade liberalization since the late 1980s. While trade liberalization alone did not necessarily generate sustained economic growth, it could, if accompanied by other measures, contribute more effectively to poverty reduction.

86. Regarding trade flows to the LDCs, the Report noted modest improvements but pointed out that the non-grant component of the overall flows had increased more than the grant component. Moreover, in recent years, aid flows to LDCs, had shifted away from supply capacities and the physical infrastructure towards human and social needs. In the 1990s, aid for agricultural development had been only half of what it had been in the 1980s. Aid should therefore be targeted more towards building production and trade capacities. UNCTAD attached great importance to its role of providing technical assistance for capacity-building in the LDCs. The Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to the Least Developed Countries was one of the main priority areas of its work. Through the Integrated Framework, UNCTAD and its institutional partners responded to LDC trade-related capacity-building needs in a complementary and cost-effective manner.

87. Compared to countries that had access to the sea, landlocked developing countries faced serious economic handicaps. Transport and transit costs increased their import bills and reduced the competitiveness of their exports. The lack of access to the sea was a multifaceted problem which had far-reaching negative effects on economic development and integration into the global economy.

88. Enhancing international cooperation in the area of transit transport was an important way of helping landlocked developing countries to deal with their handicap. In that regard, UNCTAD attached great importance to its contribution to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which called for technical assistance in connection with transit transport problems, and to regional and subregional approaches in designing solutions to those problems that would improve the scope for mutually beneficial and cooperative trade and transport arrangements.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.